**Grand Valley State University Responses to Questions  
RFP # 224-39 Athletics Fundraising Study April 1, 2024**

1. **Can you provide more details on the specific goals and objectives of GVSU Athletics' fundraising strategy, both short-term and long-term?**

The request for proposal is to assess our current athletic fundraising strategy and benchmark our processes against best practices in the industry. Both short and long strategies should be assessed and recommended.

Short term goals

- Identify and assess current fundraising practices and processes in our athletics department.

- Produce a written report to map the donor experience from identification through stewardship.

- Complete a SWOT analysis (or equivalent) on fundraising practices in athletics.

- Recommend strategies to improve efficiency and increase funds raised.

Long term goals

- Increase philanthropic support for athletics, with a specific focus on major gift level fundraising.

- Identify resources (financial and staffing) for a successful athletics fundraising program.

- Implement a plan to provide sustained support for athletics.

1. **Who are the primary stakeholders within the Athletics Department and University Development Division that we will be meeting with to inventory current fundraising practices, and what roles do they play in the fundraising process?** 
   1. The main individuals involved in the process will be the following: Laura Aikens – Vice President for University Development, Executive Director, GVU Foundation: She oversees University Development and is ultimately responsible to the Board of Trustees for raising funds.
   2. Shannon Specter – Assistant Vice President, Philanthropy: The Senior Director who manages our Director of Athletic Giving reports to her.
   3. Andrew Bixel – Senior Director of College Advancement: The Director of Athletic Giving reports to him.
   4. Kim Schmidt – Director of Athletic Giving: This individual works with the Athletic Department on raising funds for athletics primarily via individuals. This person has been the main point of contact for Athletics. The Vice President and Senior Director become involved as needed on projects.
   5. Keri Becker – Director of Athletics: She is responsible for athletics at Grand Valley State University. She attends prospect/donor meetings as needed to secure gifts.   
        
      Doug Lipinski – Deputy Director of Athletics – External Relations (Communications, Tickets, Development, Creative): He oversees corporate sponsorships for athletics. Depending on the prospects/donors, he may become involved, especially if Becker is unable to attend.   
        
      Please note this list is not meant to be exhaustive.
2. **What methods or resources do you currently use to solicit donations from individuals, corporations, and foundations, and are there any existing strategies or initiatives that have proven particularly successful or unsuccessful?**

We currently raise funds from individuals, foundations, and corporations by meeting with prospects/donors to identify philanthropic interests and then asking/submitting a request. A Director of Athletic Giving was added about three years ago due to a reorganization in staffing. We believe we have been successful in attracting donors to give small, annual gifts, but now need to grow our major gift program. We are requesting a full SWOT (or equivalent) analysis to determine additional areas of growth.

1. **Are there any specific challenges or pain points that GVSU Athletics has encountered in its fundraising efforts that we should be aware of?**

Our Development Office is centralized. The Director of Athletic Giving is physically located within our athletics facility but reports into the Development Office. Through this project, we are hoping to take inventory of current practices and processes, including roles and responsibilities of staff in order to optimize these resources to generate additional philanthropic support. One of the unique challenges within fundraising at GVSU is that many of our donors are philanthropic to the area of greatest need at the university, which is demonstrated through a donation to our College of Business one year, the library the next, and athletics the third year. Although athletics does have a following, many of the principal level donors are also donors for other presidential priorities. Navigating the prioritization process for these donors has been difficult when we have competing areas that need resources.

We also are working through internal processes around naming of spaces, corporate sponsorships, and other items where collaboration is important and valued.

1. **Can you provide insights into the budget and resources allocated for implementing changes based on the recommendations, including any potential staffing considerations?**

Grand Valley is committed to learning how we can enhance/improve this area and then directing the necessary resources toward it. While we do not have an unlimited budget, we know this area is important to our overall aspirations for philanthropic giving. We recently implemented a new area within our central development office to focus on the fundraising needs of schools, colleges, and units. Our Senior Director of College Advancement has led this initiative. We have successfully hired a gift officer for our College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the Athletics position falls on this team, and we are planning for future positions. The annual salary + benefits of positions on this team are shared with the respective schools, colleges, and units in a 50/50 ratio. Because this initiative was implemented after our Director of Athletic Giving assumed the position, the Director of Athletic Giving is 100% funded by University Development. Future roles will follow the 50/50 model.

We are happy to have a phone call to discuss in more details if this would be helpful.

Thank you for considering the opportunity to work on this proposal.